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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003057

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SUBJECT: TRAFFIC CONTROLS, SECURITY SAP ENTHUSIASM FOR GAMES

REF: BEIJING 2839

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson,  
reasons 1.4 (B/D).

SUMMARY  
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1. (C) A security officer at Chinese national airline Air China (protect) told us the airline has increased the number of plain-clothes air marshals on flights to and from Lhasa and Urumqi, capitals of China's restive Tibet and Xinjiang autonomous regions, respectively. Security has become the overriding concern of Chinese authorities in the lead-up to the Olympic Games, and traffic restrictions and slow business for some retail stores and restaurants are draining away the excitement that once surrounded the Games. Beijingers are finding that even group activities with no connection to the Olympics, such as dance classes, are being cancelled. Authorities have resorted to blunt security measures, our interlocutors said, because the threat facing the Games is so undefined. As a result of the oppressive atmosphere, some Beijing residents are experiencing "Olympics fatigue." END SUMMARY.

#### Higher Security on Tibet and Xinjiang Flights -----

2. (C) Mei Gang (strictly protect), a security officer for Air China, told PolOff August 1 that the airline has beefed up security on Tibet and Xinjiang routes. Normally, Mei said, Air China stations only one plain-clothed air marshal aboard each flight to and from Lhasa and Urumqi, but this has been raised to two for the Olympics. Mei confirmed Western press reports of extra security in Xinjiang airports directed at Uighur passengers. Mei said executives at the airline are "extremely nervous" and described daily meetings in which staff members were urged to "make sure no incident occurs."

#### Nervous Idleness -----

3. (C) Many of our contacts described Beijing as a city tensely awaiting the Games' Opening Ceremony. Group activities with no apparent connection to the Olympics have been put on hold. One contact described how his wife's dance classes have been suspended during the Games. The spouse of an American visiting scholar at Central University for Nationalities (CUN) told PolOff that her martial arts class was cancelled for no clear reason. Li Qiang, Dean of Tsinghua University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, said academic research at the school's sociology department has come to a halt. Li said he had planned to spend the Olympics period conducting public polling research but was pressured by university officials to delay any survey work until after the Closing Ceremony. "Everyone has lots of time on their hands," Li said.

#### Lower Expectations: Safety Sole Criterion of Success -----

4. (C) Authorities have resorted to blunt security measures, our interlocutors said, because the threat facing the Games is so undefined. While most mentioned Uighur and Tibetan separatists as the primary threats facing the Games, several contacts noted that authorities are just as concerned about acts of violence unrelated to the long-standing issues of Tibet and Xinjiang. "Much 'unrest' in China," Li Qiang said, "involves acts by individual malcontents." Li and other contacts cited the July 1 murder of six Shanghai police officers by a single assailant as an

event that particularly spooked officials responsible for Olympics security. The Shanghai attack, Li Qiang said, plus recent unrest in Weng'an, Guizhou Province, and the July 21 Kunming bus bombings, have caused the authorities to reemphasize traditional methods of social control even though heavy-handed security measures risk damaging China's international image.

15. (C) Many Beijing residents with whom we spoke noted the contrast between the spontaneous partying that broke out in 2001 when the International Olympic Committee awarded the Games to Beijing and the subdued atmosphere in the week prior to the Opening Ceremony. Wang Chong (protect), a columnist for the China Youth

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Daily who is coordinating the paper's Olympics coverage, said the public mood has soured "somewhat" due to traffic restrictions and the fact that many feel detached from the Games. Most Beijing residents, Wang commented, cannot get tickets to the events, and only university students have the opportunity to volunteer at the venues. Wang noted that the initial slogans emphasizing a "Great Olympics" have given way in recent months to new slogans emphasizing security. (Note: One sign displayed on Beijing's 2nd Ring Road says "Harmonious Beijing, Safe Olympics.") Zhou Qing'an, Director of the Public Diplomacy Research Program at Tsinghua University, likewise observed that the Chinese leadership has lowered the criteria for "success" from hosting the "best Olympics" to simply pulling off a "safe Olympics." Olympics fatigue has already set in, he said, noting the lack of excitement and buzz in Beijing, which he attributed partly to the lower-than-expected numbers of foreign visitors.

RANDT